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ABSTRACT

The distinguishing feature of the secondary level language arts methods course at the University of North Florida is that all readings, assignments, and class activities are designed to promote the highest possible degree of student participation in and responsibility for the learning process. Underlying all course activities is the premise that the more actively engaged a student becomes in the learning process, the more likely it is that learning will occur. The instructor's modeling of desired behaviors is reinforced by requiring students to practice similar strategies, both in simulated settings and in actual secondary school classrooms, where the students spend two or more hours each week. The careful classroom analysis of students' first attempts at teaching is the keystone of the course. Students must teach at least two lessons, using their peers as an audience, prior to executing those plans with high school students. A number of evaluation techniques are used to give students as much feedback as possible about their teaching behaviors and ways to improve their teaching behaviors. (Attached are a teacher checklist for evaluating student teaching behaviors, a student self-evaluation form for field experiences, and a checklist of appropriate teacher behaviors.) (RL)

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Making Figs of Thistles: Establishing Desired Teacher Behaviors in Pre-Interns

Experientia does it--as papa used to say.

-- Dickens' Mrs. Micawber

Mary Loftin Grimes

One of the greatest challenges facing any teacher educator is that of contriving situations wherein students are required to bridge the gap between educational theory and practice. It is relatively simple, it seems, to transmit sound teaching/learning theory in such a way that would-be teachers are able to pass tests on that body of knowledge. But to get them to practice what you preach and they profess to endorse is another matter. Having watched many a promising Language Arts Major revert, during the internship, to behaviors modelled not upon theory propounded in the pre-internship experience, but upon the pedagogical style of that intern's least imaginative high school teacher, this writer knows well the frustrations of attempting to modify the teaching behaviors of education students.

The aforementioned student, having been taught that rote learning is ineffective for the acquisition of concepts and generalizations, stands before his first class, shielded by his sturdy lesson plan book, and spouts information that the class may remember until Friday, when they will be tested on it, but not long thereafter. Throughout this exchange the intern proudly perceives himself to be the fount of wisdom for all those thirsty little minds, ignoring the fact

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that the Sponge Theory of Knowledge Acquisition has long been discredited. Or, having duplicated copious notes which she took in college courses, the conscientious intern passes along these gems to her charges, and is shocked and saddened when this effort does not produce Lovers of Literature. The result of such classroom transactions is disillusionment and exhaustion for the intern (it's not easy being the Font of Wisdom) and apathy and resentment among his/her charges.

If one truth stands out concerning the internship, it is that the College Supervisor has relatively little impact upon this process whereby base metal is transmuted into gold There is the rare exception, of course, when one's advice, hastily scribbled on a yellow legal pad, changes the course of an individual's life. Your suggestion that the intern allow the students to do some of the talking might make you unpopular, but it might also raise the consciousness level of the intern and effect a positive and dramatic change in that person's behavior. But, given the constraints, fiscal and otherwise, of most universities' arrangements for intern supervision, where the supervisor is often limited to the required number of site visitations, the college supervisor is simply not available to be the guiding force in an intern's life. The directing teacher often must assume many responsibilities which would best be met by the supervisor, given more favorable circumstances. While some universities may manage the situation more successfully than others, this

constraint is a problem, to some degree, for all teacher education programs.

It is obvious, then, that if the university hopes to effect the desired congruence between theory and practice in its students, it must do so prior to the internship experience. This article proposes one resolution to the problem described. The method proposed has been developed over a period of several years, as the writer taught and refined a Secondary Language Arts Methods course for the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. The course is required of English majors desiring Teacher Certification in Florida. The method described is not limited by the course content, but could be adapted for use in almost any education course.

The University of North Florida's Secondary Language Arts Methods course is traditional, to the extent that it exposes students to the scope, sequence, and materials available for teacher use in the Secondary Language Arts program. Its distinguishing feature is that all readings, assignments, and class activities are designed to promote the highest possible degree of student participation in and responsibility for the learning process. Written assignments do not ask for mere regurgitation of research findings, but require that students encounter the world of the classroom and react to it, or plan activities which will later be implemented there. Readings are chosen for their applicability, and include several "idea" books--collections of strategies which can easily be adapted for use by the novice. (Helen

Lee and Stephen Judy's texts are favorites, but others are also recommended and available.[1]) Class activities are so designed that the student is required to be the agent rather than simply the receptor in the learning process. Underlying all course activities is the premise that the more actively engaged a student becomes in the learning process, the more likely it is that learning will occur.[2] To that end, the course instructor models those desired teacher behaviors which lead to the active engagement of the learner: asking rather than telling, allowing students to experience an idea rather than just read or hear about it, using induction and indirection whenever possible, allowing students choices in the pursuit of knowledge and in the planning of activities, and encouraging the exchange of ideas between student and student, and not just between student and instructor.

These strategies, practiced consistently by the instructor, create a classroom atmosphere wherein people learn from each other, rather than being dependent upon the instructor for all direction. The instructor's modeling of desired behaviors is reinforced by requiring students to practice similar strategies, both in a simulated setting and in the secondary classroom, where they spend two or more hours each week. Students must teach at least two lessons, using their peers as an audience, prior to executing those plans with high school students. Both of these experiences are subjected to careful analysis by class participants. Classmates are asked to respond immediately in writing after each peer

teaching experience, while both the college student and the high school cooperating teacher submit a written critique of the field teaching efforts. So the controlling structure in this course for changing student behavior is as follows: the instructor models, the student practices, and the instructor and students analyze and evaluate.

In the majority of instances, students taking this course show a marked improvement, upon their second attempt to demonstrate the identified teaching skills, in their ability to engage their charges with the lesson content. While other factors, such as length of time in the course or familiarity with the material being taught, may account in part for this change, it is my impression that the primary reason for the improved performance is the careful classroom analysis of students' first attempts at teaching. Since that analysis is structured so that all class members contribute to it, it deserves a detailed description.

Students are prepared for the analysis/evaluation procedure as they are briefed for the peer-teaching experience. They are told that they will play the part of students to the peer's teacher, but, unlike most students, they will be expected to pay close attention to the teaching strategies being attempted. After each peer-teaching episode has taken place and before any discussion of that experience is initiated, each "student" is asked to write a note to the "teacher." This note will be read only by the person to whom it is addressed. Writers are cautioned to confine remarks

to observable attributes of the lesson. (Fantastic and Super, in the absence of other sentence parts, are inappropriate.) To direct students' comments towards such attributes, they are asked to complete either or both of the following sentence stems:

I liked the way you....

Your lesson would have been more effective if you had. . . .

The use of these divergent stems allows for a latitude of response while controlling the nature of that response. One decided advantage of using this feedback technique is that students seem much more receptive to criticism received in this manner than they are to comments received from the instructor alone. Perhaps the force of fifteen or twenty people saying essentially the same thing is just too powerful to ignore.

After students have had several minutes to write their comments, they are invited to share any perceptions they wish with the class. Again, this process tends to be divergent, but is, once more, instructor-directed. As their observations point out salient characteristics of the lesson, the instructor interjects questions such as:

How might this lesson need to be modified for the real classroom?

What props, materials could be added to enhance the lesson?

How many things could students do for themselves that the teacher did for them?

What other experiences could be used to teach this concept?

What skills do students bring to this lesson? What else will they need to know for the lesson to be meaningful?

How could the teacher involve more people in the lesson at any given moment?

Where does this lesson belong in the larger scheme of the curriculum? How might it be made to mesh more smoothly with that larger scheme?

What else might you need to know about students to make this lesson more effective?

How might class time and/or movement be more efficiently managed in this lesson?

Gradually, as several first attempts at peer-teaching are analyzed in this manner, students develop their own checklist of desired teacher behaviors, which is revised as the class progresses.[3] Evaluation of a fifteen-minute lesson may take as much as thirty or forty minutes in the beginning. The process tends to become less lengthy as the quarter progresses.

Once the student's lesson has been evaluated by classmates, it is ready to be subjected to the crucible of the real classroom. This time the evaluators bring a different perspective to analyzing the lesson. The cooperating teacher, who has been cured of that flaming idealism which yet infects the college instructor, evaluates the student upon her ability to survive and to convey content effectively. The student, responding once again to divergent stems provided by the instructor, most often focuses her critical remarks upon whether or not the class responded well to the lesson. The cooperating teacher responds to the lesson both

verbally (via a conference with the student) and in writing.[5] An informal debriefing conference allows the student and the cooperating teacher to exchange perceptions about how the lesson went, and what might have made it more effective. A checklist provides the cooperating teacher with some specific qualities to look for, and serves to give the instructor some idea of how successful the lesson was.

All of these evaluation techniques, exercised after the first teaching experiences, serve to alert the student to plan for success the second time around. The second teaching attempts almost always show the student's thoughtful preparation via more extensive use of examples, a broader variety of stimuli, more flexibility and spontaneity in the use of questioning techniques, and greater demands upon students' intellects. The result of this planning is a more interesting and stimulating lesson and a higher degree of student involvement in that lesson. I believe this improved performance to be the result of the combined influences of modelling, practice, and evaluation, with the evaluation procedure taking much of the credit for the change. As far as this writer is concerned, the unexamined lesson is not worth giving!

Feedback from teachers who have later directed these same students during their internships indicates that there is considerable carry-over of the desired behaviors to that experience. Where the Methods course is taken the quarter just prior to internship, the carry-over appears to be the strongest. To further improve the process, I have proposed,

and hope to initiate during the coming academic year, training for directing teachers, so that they can continue the pattern of evaluating the intern's teaching, with the goal of strengthening specific aspects of that performance. This model might necessitate some changes in a given university's perception of how the intern should function initially in a classroom setting. The old "sink-or-swim" model, wherein the interns arrive one day and take over the next, would have to give way to a schedule of single lessons subjected to intensive analysis.[6] The close working relationship required in my proposed model would also necessitate a change in many intern-directing teacher relationships, where both parties are often either unwilling or unable to be candid with one another. Once a cadre of in-service teachers is trained in this plan, however, the extension of modelling, practice, and evaluation beyond the Methods course into the internship will serve to strengthen the desired teacher behaviors, and should lessen the likelihood of interns' reverting to previously observed bad behaviors under the stress of this demanding experience.

The model described in this paper is implemented at considerable cost to both instructor and students. Its extension into the internship will require even more effort. The results, I believe, are worth the effort. To help students develop autonomy in teaching style is not easy. The freedom and flexibility which that autonomy allows, however, will touch the lives of every pupil that intern encounters.

While that effect is immeasurable, it must not be discounted. It is hoped that this article will serve to nurture the seeds of change in this direction in other teacher education programs, as they practice the delicate art of changing students' behaviors.[7]

Notes

[1]See Helen C. Lee, A Humanistic Approach to Teaching Secondary School English (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1973) and Stephen N. Judy, Explorations in the Teaching of Secondary English: A Source Book for Experimental Teaching (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

[2]I am indebted to Alan Purves for expanding this idea in his excellent work, How Porcupines Make Love: Notes on a Response Centered Curriculum (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), which is a required text in my course.

[3]See Appendix A for a sample checklist, developed by one such class.

[4]See Appendix B for a sample response form.

[5]See Appendix C for the Teacher Evaluation Checklist, developed by students to correspond with Purves' teaching model.

[6]The University of Tennessee has developed and field-tested such a plan, which faculty members presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators, Orlando, Florida, February, 1979. Their research is entitled, "Using Structured Feedback to Change Student Teacher Behaviors."

[7]For additional information, contact the author at the Department of Elementary/Secondary Education, University of North Florida, P. O. Box 17074, Jacksonville, Florida, 32216.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Checklist: Indicate the degree to which you think the following qualifications were demonstrated, using a scale of 1-5. 1=quality minimally present, 5= quality demonstrated with distinction. If the criterion does not apply, mark NA.

_____Teacher encouraged the participation of all students.

_____Visual aids enhanced the lesson.

_____Teacher maintained momentum during lesson by providing for student movement.

_____Teacher provided for a variety of activities.

_____Questioning strategies forced students to function beyond the levels of knowledge, comprehension.

_____Teacher built upon what students already knew.

_____Teacher provided open-ended (divergent) questions, activities.

_____Teacher made use of analogy.

_____Teacher accepted all student responses.

_____Teacher used concrete examples.

_____Teacher avoided the prescriptive approach to content.

_____Teacher stimulated students' imagination, creativity.

_____Students were asked to make generalizations, draw conclusions.

_____Teacher avoided being the sole source for information.

_____Teacher repeated, rephrased for emphasis, clarification.

_____Students were asked to produce, generate material, as well as select, identify examples.

Open-ended section:

I liked the way you_____

Your lesson would have been more effective if you had_____

_____

APPENDIX B

Evaluation: Field Experience

1. I think that my behavioral objectives were:

_____Realistic _____Appropriate _____Other (explain)

2. The materials and supplies I chose to support my plan were:

_____Effective (explain)

_____Ineffective (explain)

3. My teacher activity sequence was (could have been):

_____

_____

_____

4. The student activity sequence was (could have been):

_____

_____

_____

5. My evaluation procedures indicate that I:

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

Checklist of Teacher Behaviors appropriate to a Response-Centered Approach.

1. Teacher behaviors which:

_____reflect careful and adequate preparation.

_____avoid domination of classroom.

_____avoid authoritative role.

_____challenge and goad when necessary.

_____show rather than tell, demonstrate rather than lecture.

_____tolerate a wide variety of student behaviors.

2. Teacher flexibility in:

_____managing the physical environment.

_____maintaining momentum in activities.

_____adapting creatively to changing conditions.

_____using appropriate testing techniques.

3. Teacher skill in executing particular maneuvers, such as:

_____Constructing objectives which are congrent with the methods, strategies utilized.

_____establishing set.

_____pre-cueing.

_____giving clear directions.

_____using positive reinforcement techniques.

_____achieving smooth transitions.

_____achieving closure.

4. Questioning techniques which allow for:

_____a wide variety of responses.

_____student challenge, growth to occur.

_____stimulation of all students.

_____student discovery via independent routes.

5. Opportunity for student to interact with:

_____text.

_____other students.

_____teacher.

_____other materials, media, resources.

6. Evidence of sensitivity in:

_____receiving and reacting to both verbal and non-verbal messages.

_____conveying concern, understanding for all students.

_____showing that what students are and what they say is valued.

_____allowing time for students to absorb new material.

7. Personal qualities which give evidence of:

_____effective use of voice.

_____congruent non-verbal communication.

_____willingness to change.

_____ability to evaluate realistically and constructively his/her own plans and procedures.

_____a sense of humor.

_____effective use of body movement.

8. Establishment of a classroom atmosphere in which:

_____students feel free to be candid, spontaneous.

_____student-student and student-teacher interaction shows evidence of mutual respect.

_____students assume responsibility for supporting their assertions.

_____growth toward independence, self-direction is encouraged.

9. Provision of opportunities for student response in the following areas:

_____Engagement-Involvement.

_____Perception.

_____Interpretation.

_____Evaluation.

10. Means of evaluating the quality of student response in the following areas:

_____re-creating (performing).

_____valuing.

_____generalizing.

_____evaluating.

_____interpreting.

_____relating.

_____discriminating.

_____describing.